

MIND, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY

Seminar Series

UC MERCED, SPRING 2017

Monday, April 24, 2017 — KL 217 — 3:00PM-4:30PM

Susanne Jaeggi, Ph.D.
University of California, Irvine



“Cognitive Training And Transfer – The Importance of Individual Differences”

Brain training and whether or not it works has been the recent focus of many controversial discussions. There are numerous commercial products claiming to improve general mental ability; however, the scientific evidence for such claims is sparse. In order for brain training to be effective, we want trainees to not just get better at the training task, but we also want them to be able to “transfer” their skills to other tasks or domains. For the past decade, I and my collaborators have been using brain training as a tool to investigate brain plasticity, and we have been developing interventions targeting children as young as 5 years old to older adults in their eighties. Our work suggests that cognitive training can indeed lead to generalizing effects in various relevant domains, such as problem solving, math and reading skills. Nonetheless, our data also reveal important individual differences that constrain training efficacy, some of which are related to pre-existing abilities or motivation. I will conclude by emphasizing that the focus on individual differences can provide important insights to inform the development of more effective interventions to promote transfer, and I will outline some of the current outstanding questions, such as the longevity of training effects and its real-life consequences.

Susanne Jaeggi is an Associate Professor at the UC Irvine School of Education and the Department of Cognitive Sciences, directing the Working Memory and Plasticity Lab, and she is a Fellow at the UCI Center for the Neurobiology of Learning and Memory. She is an Experimental Psychologist and Cognitive Neuroscientist, and she has PhDs in both Cognitive Psychology and Neuroscience from the University of Bern, Switzerland, as well as a “Habilitation” in Psychology (an advanced degree beyond the PhD level; also from the University of Bern). Prior to joining the faculty at UC Irvine, she conducted post-doctoral work at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, and she was an Assistant Professor in Psychology and the Program for Neuroscience and Cognitive Science at the University of Maryland at College Park. Her work focuses on the investigation of individual differences and underlying mechanisms of working memory, executive control and related higher cognitive functions across the lifespan, and within that domain, her major interest focuses on the development of cognitive interventions and the investigation of whether and how those interventions generalize to non-trained cognitive domains.

Please contact David Noelle (dnoelle@ucmerced.edu) for more information.